

## Abraham Lincoln papers

From Nathaniel P. Banks to Abraham Lincoln, September 6, 1864

New Orleans, 6. Sept: 1864.

Sir.

The constitution was submitted to the People of Louisiana yesterday at an election held in all the Parishes within our lines for this purpose and for the election of members of Congress and a State Legislature. I am gratified to be able to report that the Constitution was ratified by a very large majority of votes, and that intelligent able and patriotic men have been elected to Congress, after a thorough canvass, in which men of all parties participated and which was conducted with perfect freedom. The vote is not so large as we expected. Two weeks before the election an order was issued from the Head Quarters of Major General Canby, directing a general enrollment of the militia.

Interested parties secretly represented that all citizens Registered or voting in the election would be forced into the military service of the Country—

No representations could disabuse them of this fear. Many of the men employed by the govt declined to vote or to register for this reason. The officers of the Govt civil or military have not assisted with energy. With exception of Mr Dennison,<sup>1</sup> collector, no aid has been given by the Treasury Department.

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1 George S. Denison

It is not improbable they may have voted but nothing more. Nevertheless about nine thousand (9000) votes have been given by the unquestionably loyal people of the State, seven thousand of which will be in favor of the Constitution and two thousand against it. Full returns are not received yet, but enough to make the result above stated certain.

This is a large vote, considering these circumstances: 1st There was no serious opposition to the Constitution. 2d The factious opposition manifested in the north encouraged opponents of your administration here, some in high office silently to resist its adoption and to prevent voters from coming out 3d The election, in September, the fever month, found many of the most prominent and influential registered voters absent in the North, and rendered it difficult on account of the great heat for a large class of men to participate in the contest: 4" The poverty of the People and the State and City governments has made it impossible to appropriate money for the election, as heretofore

when voters have been invariably brought to the Polls: 5th The time allowed for the canvass was unusually short—

Nevertheless a good and honest vote has been given for and against the Constitution— No person, citizen or soldier, has voted who had not the right by the laws of the State. Every voter in the city of New Orleans is registered: and every soldiers vote throughout the state. The election was open and quiet: The city was in perfect order, and no arrests were made during the day or night.

There is much misapprehension of the condition of this State, in the North. The People overlook the effect of the Revolution upon the Population. Not less than one fourth of the Population of this state has disappeared since the commencement of the war. Of 708.000 people in 1860, not more than 500.000. remain within and beyond the lines.

The mortality among old people, and especially among the negroes has been very great.— Removals from the state to the North and to Europe, and Mexico have been numerous. From 42. to 45.000 men enlisted in the Rebel army— All these causes have reduced the voting population much more than has been estimated. The average vote of the state for ten years past has not been over 35.000. and never over 5 000 in any election. All strongly contested elections here are known to have been vitiated by large numbers of fraudulent votes—

From these facts I infer that 20.000. votes is a large number for the whole state, and that the entire voting population within and beyond the lines does not exceed 30.000— Ten thousand votes, in the heat of summer, in the absence of large numbers of people, and in an election where there is no contest, is a respectable representation of the strength of the People. where it has been as honest and as united, representing as good a cause as in this case. I am confident it will receive the approval of the Country I ought to state that (10.000.) Ten thousand loyal and legal voters, who have taken the iron-clad oath are registered in the city Parish of New Orleans alone, and there is here, and in other parishes a record of every vote in the elections of this year is made.

Mr Field and Mr: Bonzano<sup>2</sup> who are elected to Congress from the New Orleans Districts had able and vigorous opponents. Mr: Field whom you know was opposed by a Radical abolitionist Dr: Dostel, and Mr Bonzano by a rank proslavery democrat: neither will, have 300 majority— Hence the freedom & fairness of our canvass—

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<sup>2</sup> Neither Alexander P. Field nor M. F. Bonzano was allowed to take his seat in the House.

History will record the fact that all the problems involved in restoration of States and the reconstruction of government have been already solved in Louisiana with a due regard to the



elevation of the black, and security of the white Race. Your policy here will be adopted in other states and work out in the end the re-establishment of the Union, into whose ever hands its admistration may fall.

N. P. Banks

M. G. C